

## Dissident allowed to leave China for study in America



**FINALLY IN U.S.** — U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (left), R.-N.J., greeted Chinese human rights advocate Chen Guangcheng upon Chen's arrival in the United States on May 19. Smith has been a longtime supporter of the man he considers one of "the bravest defenders of women's rights in the world." Chen is credited with exposing China's brutal one-child policy that has resulted in tens of millions of coerced abortions in that country. (BP photo)

**NEW YORK (BP and local reports)** — Chinese human rights advocate Chen Guangcheng arrived in the United States Saturday (May 19) with his wife and two children, beginning a new chapter of freedom despite ongoing concern for his family in China.

With little notice, Chen boarded a plane in Beijing en route to Newark Liberty Airport in New Jersey, where CNN reported he arrived to

little fanfare after the U.S. State Department prohibited public and media access.

Chen spoke hours later to numerous reporters and onlookers at New York University, where he has been granted a fellowship to study law. There, Chen indicated through a translator that he had received partial U.S.

see CHINA on p. 5

## Christian churches face demolition in Aceh, Indonesia

**JAKARTA, Indonesia (BP and local reports)** — The election of a hard-line Islamic governor in Indonesia's Aceh Province in early April appears to have opened the way for a crackdown on the minority Christian community, which saw 17 churches sealed shut in early May.

The province was the scene of a major disaster relief and recovery effort by Mississippi Baptists after a devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2004.

Emboldened by the election of Zaini Abdullah of the militant Aceh Party (Partai Aceh, or PA), hundreds of Islamists demonstrated in front of the office of Aceh Singkil regency (district-level government) on April 30, demanding area church buildings be not only sealed but demolished.

Christian leaders told Compass Direct News that, besides the usual pretext of lack of church permits — applications which local authorities routinely deny or delay — the demands were based on a controversial agreement that Christians reportedly were forced to sign in 2001 stipulating that there be only one church and four chapels in the regency.

The number of churches in the regency had grown to 22. An official of the Indonesian Fellowship of Churches, Jeirry Simampow, reported that the demonstrators were upset with the Interfaith Harmony Forum for allowing the growth of churches in the area.

"The number of Christians has reached 12,000," Simampow said, adding that the church growth has not been accompanied by building permits. "Some houses are forced to function as churches," he said, "and some buildings are only semi-permanent."

Simampow noted that there is a strong, systematic movement to close churches in the Aceh Singkil regency based on the selective enforcement of building permit requirements.

Of the 17 churches that were closed, 11 belong to the Protestant Christian Church of Pakpak Dairi, or GKPPD. Elson Lingga, GKPPD district superintendent, told Compass that the mob clamored for the demolition of the church buildings and a new acting regent agreed to the demand on May 2. This position was supported by the police

see Aceh on p. 5

## Margaret Lackey plaque dedicated at Pilgrim's Rest



Kay Cassibry (left), executive director of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, and Jim Didlake (center), director of men's ministry for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, present Johnnie Stewart, pastor of Pilgrim's Rest Church in Copiah Association, with a plaque on May 20 commemorating the baptism of Margaret McRae Lackey in Pilgrim's Rest Church. Lackey was the first salaried director of Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, and the Mississippi Baptist state mission offering is named in her honor of her passion for Mississippi missions. Cassibry discovered Lackey's link to Pilgrim's Rest Church while conducting research on her life and ministry. Lackey is buried in a Jackson cemetery. Didlake also grew up in Pilgrim's Rest Church and was baptized there. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

### Inside this issue

Directions ..... 6

Sunday School

Lessons

Editorial

Bibliocipher

How to Be

a Christian

Revivals &

Homecoming

Just for the

Classifieds

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### When Christians make news

Perhaps you missed the latest musical release from the death metal band Decide entitled, "Kill the Christians," which contains anti-Christian lyrics too vile to print in a family newspaper. Didn't read about that in the mainstream news media? Too bad.

Through the convenience of modern Internet shopping, you can now purchase campaign-style buttons, T-shirts, coffee mugs, and even bumper stickers that contain the offensive slogan adopted by the atheist movement, "So many Christians, so few lions." The mainstream news media seem to have missed that story, too.

However, did you read about the Mississippi legislator who posted to his personal Facebook page a Scripture passage from the Old Testament book of Leviticus that condemned homosexuality and called for those who practice it to be put to death? Of course you did, all over the mainstream news media.

Andy Gipson of Braxton, a second-term state representative and member of First Church, Magee, drew fire from across the country when he used Leviticus 20:13 to argue against the homosexual political agenda, opining, "Anyway you slice it, it [same-sex marriage] is sin: see Romans 1:26-28 and Leviticus 20:13."

In the hysterical reporting that followed, the mainstream news media skipped over Romans 1:26-28, which Gipson mentioned first and reads in the Holman Christian Standard Version (HCSB) translation:

*This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. The males in the same way also left natural relations with females and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Males committed shameful acts with males and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error. And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a worthless mind to do what is morally wrong.*

The first half of Leviticus 20:13 in HCSB states forthrightly enough:

*If a man sleeps with a man as with a woman, they have both committed a detestable thing.*

The second half of the verse in HCSB, however, is the part that got Gipson in trouble with the mainstream news media:

*They must be put to death; their blood is on their own hands.*

The uproar went on for days. The Huffington Post, an Internet site that tends to lean left in its political reporting, ran the headline, "Andy Gipson, Mississippi GOP Lawmaker, Blasts Gays, Cites Bible Passage Calling For Their Death." Various liberal pundits also scorched Gipson for his Facebook comments.

The result, according to Gipson, were death threats targeted at him and his family. It got so bad that The Clarion Ledger newspaper in Jackson issued an editorial that read, "Regardless of what you think of his stance on gay marriage — or if he even erred in using Leviticus 20:13 to back up his point — death threats against him and his family are ridiculous. They have absolutely no place in decent society, and certainly not in public discourse over a topic as controversial and emotionally charged as this one."

This column is not meant as a defense of Gipson, an attorney and bivocational minister, or his handling of this matter. He is informed and articulate enough to handle his own defense. There are some rather troubling aspects of this story, however, and more than a few lessons to be gleaned.

First, it's clear that Christians will seldom — if ever — get a fair shake in the mainstream news and entertainment media in this country. An obscure, Satanic rock band named Decide can call for death to Christians, and atheists can print threatening T-shirts, but that's not news. A Christian public figure can quote Scripture on his private Facebook page, however, and it is manufactured into a national story for days.

Secondly, the mainstream news media are constantly monitoring social media and other modern public forums for comments and actions by which Christians can be ridiculed and marginalized. That is obvious.

Thirdly, we must use caution and exercise wisdom when using the remarkable forms of communication we have at our disposal today, always keeping in mind that there are many individuals and groups out there who wish to do harm to our cause (Matt. 28:18-20).

Lastly, may we always remember who we are, and Whose we are, and live every day like we believe that in every aspect of our lives. They'll still twist our words and pervert our meaning, but we'll know we've done the right thing.

## Becoming preoccupied with ourselves in church

Any healthy church must have some level of inward focus. Those in the church should be disciplined. Hurting members need genuine concern and ministry. Healthy fellowship among the members is a good sign for a congregation, but churches can lose their outward focus and become preoccupied with the perceived needs and desires of the members.

Dollars spent and time expended can quickly become focused on the demands of those inside the congregation. When that happens, the church has become inwardly obsessed. It is no longer a Great Commission congregation.

In my research of and consultation with churches, I have kept a checklist of potential signs that a church might be moving toward inward obsession. No church is perfect. Most churches will demonstrate one or two of these signs for a season, but the real danger comes when a church begins to manifest three or more of these warning signs for an extended period:

- **Worship wars.** One or more factions in the church want the music just the way they like it. Any deviation is met with anger and demands for change. The order of service must remain constant. Certain instrumentation is required while others are prohibited.

- **Prolonged minutia meetings.** The church spends an inordinate amount of time in different meetings. Most of the meetings deal with inconsequential items, while the Great Commission and Great Commandment rarely are discussed.

- **Facility focus.** Church facilities develop iconic status. One of the highest priorities in the church is the protection and preservation of rooms, furniture, and other visible parts of the church's buildings and grounds.

- **Program driven.** Every church has programs, even if they don't admit it. When we start doing a ministry a certain way, it takes on programmatic status. The problem is not with programs. The problem develops when the program becomes an end instead of a means to greater ministry.

- **Inwardly focused budget.** A disproportionate share of the budget is used



**Guest opinion**  
with Thom S. Rainer

to meet the needs and comforts of the members instead of reaching beyond the walls of the church.

- **Inordinate demands for pastoral care.** All church members deserve care and concern, especially in times of need and crisis. Problems develop, however, when church members have unreasonable expectations for even minor matters. Some members expect the pastoral staff to visit them regularly merely because they are members.

- **Attitudes of entitlement.** This issue could be a catch-all for many of the points named here. The overarching attitude is one of demanding and having a sense of deserving special treatment.

- **Greater concern about change than the Gospel.** Almost any noticeable changes in the church evoke the ire of many, but such passions are lacking regarding the work of the Gospel to change lives.

- **Anger and hostility.** Members are consistently angry, regularly expressing hostility toward church staff and other members.

- **Evangelistic apathy.** Very few members share their faith on a regular basis. More are concerned about their own needs rather than the greatest eternal needs of the world and community in which they live.

My list is not exhaustive. Add items and join the discussion at ThomRainer.com.

Rainer is president of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. This column first appeared on his website, ThomRainer.com, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

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**Send news, communication, and address changes to:** The Editor, Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

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VOLUME 136 • NUMBER 22 • ISSN 0005-5778

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.75 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.



# Smart phones get smarter with high-tech Bible study

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A new high-tech study Bible is using QR (Quick Read) codes to connect readers via smart phones to video teaching by noted pastor and Bible professor Gene Getz.

The Life Essentials Study Bible relays 1,500 key principles Getz has drawn from Scripture over the years, principles relevant to Christians young and old as well as every people group throughout the world.

A QR code in the study notes for each of the 1,500 principles in the Life Essentials Study Bible links readers to an expanded video teaching segment by Getz of 15 minutes or less. "These are applicational principles that tie together the entire redemption story," Getz said.

The B&H Publishing Group of LifeWay Christian Resources is the publisher for the Life Essentials Study Bible, which is subtitled "Biblical principles to live by: Learn to apply God's word in your life." The HCSB (Holman Christian Standard Bible) is the translation used for the biblical text.

Getz has long been a forerunner in media communications. In 1968 he set up the first audio/visual center on a Bible college campus at Moody Bible Institute where he was teaching. Today he illustrates his sermons by using two rear-screen projectors which he operates from the pulpit.

Getz also is a prolific print and media author. In addition to writing more than 60 books, many printed in multiple languages, he has completed a 12-part video series on spiritual maturity that has been distributed worldwide.

Getz was approached by B&H about undertaking the Life Essentials Study Bible. "They had published 12 of my 'character' books," Getz said in an interview with Baptist Press, referring to books on Abraham, David, Elijah, and other biblical figures.

"In those books, I end every chapter with principles to live by," Getz continued. "B&H asked me to do [a character book] for the whole Bible."

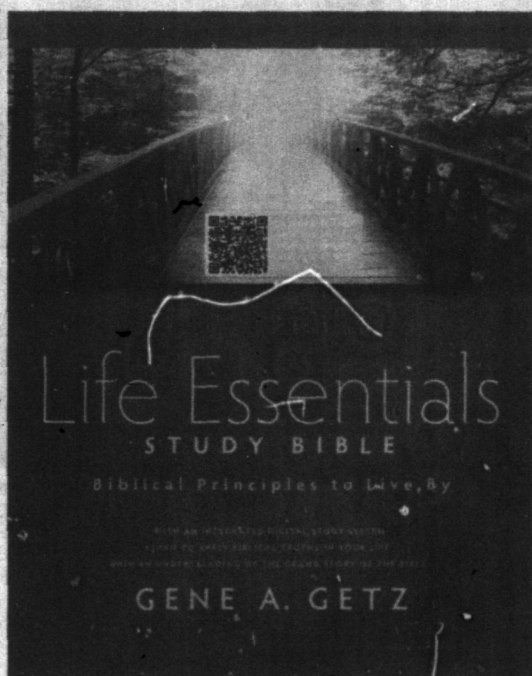
B&H was interested in a study Bible that brought together a seasoned Bible teacher with today's technology, said Tim Jordan, who provides marketing support for the Life Essentials Study Bible.

"This study Bible is going to expose people to a new way they can have devotions, because of the technology," Jordan said. "I'm 41, and didn't grow up with a phone in my hand, but this generation has that. ...It's an exciting part of the future, to connect with people in the way they're accustomed to reading content."

"Our heart is connecting people to God's Word. We want to articulate the Gospel and God's Word in a language people are used to hearing. The QR codes are a quick and easy way to share what the Bible is all about."

The Bible frequently has been termed as a how-to guide for living in relationship with God and others, and Getz refers to each how-to as a principle. "A principle is a biblical truth that is enduring and is applicable at any moment in history anywhere in the world. It's supra-cultural. If you can't apply it anywhere in the world, it's not a biblical principle."

In the Life Essentials Study Bible, Getz has identified 1,500 biblical principles. (Princi-



ples repeated in other Scripture passages are merely cross-referenced with the original).

"There's a lot of repetition in the Bible, by God's design," Getz said. "Mark has 28 principles in addition to the ones that are in Matthew. There are 51 principles in Luke you won't find in Matthew or Mark. There is so much in Luke that is brand-new."

Among the 51 principles Getz has noted, for example, in Luke: A Witness in the World — Luke 10:1-24; Obedience: Luke 11:27-28; Persistent Prayer: Luke 18: 1-8.

To start at the very beginning, Getz lists 70 principles from the Old Testament book of Genesis, with Chosen in Christ — Genesis 1:1-25 as the very first principle in the Bible.

"All Scripture is inspired by God, quoting 2 Timothy 3," Getz said. "The Word of God is the means of spiritual growth; it's the foundation of spiritual growth."

Living in the will of God, from Romans 12, is the most important principle to him, Getz said, "because of what God has done for us. Ephesians 4 [Walking Worthy] is similar. These are the top principles for believers. For unbelievers, [the most important principles] have to do with salvation."

"The Bible virtually teaches itself. [The Life Essentials Study Bible] comes out of my years of experience as a teacher, professor and pastor. You can see the pedagogical principles. It's like a built-in curriculum, a plan of study."

Highlighted blue text in the Life Essentials Study Bible relays Getz's support for the principles he identifies. "Then, you can scan the QR code, and now you have Dr. Getz expanding on that principle. It's another way of reinforcing what you're reading," said Jordan of B&H.

"It's like Dr. Getz is sitting on the couch next to me," Jordan continued. "He's a great teacher. He has a heart for shepherding people. This is a unique study Bible that's breaking some ground by building in 1,500 QR codes. Who knows where technology will take us, but God's Word will certainly be there."

# Lawsuits fly across U.S. in fight against Obama contraceptive mandate

WASHINGTON (BP) — Forty-three Catholic groups filed 12 lawsuits against the federal government on May 21, the largest number so far of coordinated actions against the Obamas administration's contraceptive mandate.

That Catholic leadership opposes the mandate is no secret, but the breadth of the lawsuits drew attention. Not only did the prominent archdiocese of Washington, D.C., headed by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, file a lawsuit, but so did social arms like Catholic Charities, which has sided with the Obama administration on past issues related to the budget such as cutting defense and preserving social programs.

The University of Notre Dame, which in 2009 invited President Obama to receive an honorary degree and speak at commencement, also filed a lawsuit against the administration. Separately, two colleges announced in May that they would be ending their student health plans because of the mandate.

The federal government now faces 23 lawsuits in 15 states over the abortion/contraceptive mandate. Many of the plaintiffs are Catholic, but three of the plaintiffs are devout business owners. Three are evangelical groups, including colleges such as Colorado Christian University. Seven states — Nebraska, South Carolina, Michigan, Texas, Florida, Ohio, and Oklahoma — also have filed suit.

Under the mandate, all insurance plans must cover contraceptives and sterilizations as preventive services without cost to employees. This includes contraceptives, as defined by the federal government, that can cause abortions of tiny embryos. The mandate has a religious exemption that critics find woefully inadequate.

The Becket Fund, representing several of the plaintiffs, has compiled a list of the lawsuits and links to the court documents: <http://www.becketfund.org/hhsinformationcentral/>

Lawyers for these plaintiffs told WORLD magazine in February that they were strategizing by filing lawsuits in different districts across the country, so as not to "put all of their eggs in one basket," but none of the suits have been filed in the states under the jurisdiction of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, a circuit that would most likely

take the administration's side.

"Nothing is a sure thing, but the most likely way to get an issue before the Supreme Court is to have a lot of high-profile cases coming down in the different circuits with different results," said Brad Jacob, a professor at Regent University School of Law, in Virginia Beach, Va.

If regional courts ruled against the contraceptive mandate, that would not change the law for the rest of the country, which is the reason for the push for it to go before the U.S. Supreme Court.

All of the plaintiffs are waiting for the Supreme Court to issue its ruling on the broader health care law, an opinion the justices will likely publish at the end of June. If the high court decides that the individual mandate is unconstitutional, that would make the lawsuits moot since the contraceptive mandate is part of that larger mandate.

Wheels are turning outside the courts, too, in civil society. On Thursday (May 24), prominent Catholic, Jewish, and evangelical leaders met in Washington, D.C. at the American Religious Freedom Program's conference. The conference included people like Robert George, the Catholic professor of jurisprudence at Princeton University; Hannah Smith, senior counsel at the Becket Fund; former Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt; Donald Landry of New York Presbyterian Hospital; and Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School.

The abortion/contraceptive mandate came up again and again at the conference. One session was titled, Unprecedented Threats to American Religious Freedom and Rights of Conscience, while another was called, Legislative Action to Constrain Overreaching Officials.

State legislators were in the audience and taking notes as they are trying to carve religious exemptions into their own health insurance laws. One Arizona legislator asked about forming a network for state legislators on the issue, which organizers said was part of the design of the conference.

If the mandate moves forward without delay, it will go into effect for most religious groups in August 2013.

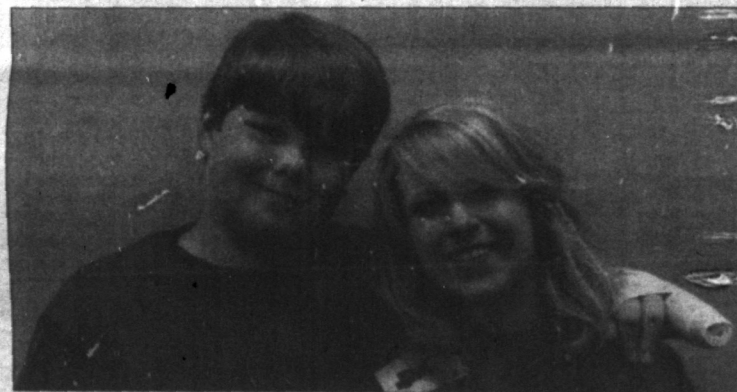
## Just for the Record



**TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL**, recently recognized participants in the 2012 Bible Drills. Pictures are participants.



**CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, honored high school and college graduates on May 13. Pictured are graduates.



**PHILADELPHIA CHURCH, ETTA**, recently recognized Bubba (left) and Lizzi Higgins for their participation in the 2012 Bible Drills.



**EBENEZER CHURCH, BASSFIELD**, held baby dedication on May 13 for Sarah Grace Sappington. Pictured are siblings Dustin, Laken, and Braiden, along with parents Jared and Marti.



**EDWARDS CHURCH, EDWARDS**, presented interim pastor John G. McCall (center) with a certificate of appreciation for serving the church for over nine years. Joining in the presentation were McCall's wife Vicki (left) and Duane Laird, chairman of deacons.



**NEW LIBERTY CHURCH, MORTON**, recently recognized Carolyn Byrd for 40 years as church treasurer. Pictured are Byrd (left) and pastor Paul Smith.



**O'TUCKOLOFA CHURCH, WATER VALLEY**, exceeded the church goal of \$550 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. Young people of the church designed paper eggs representing each \$10 given to the offering and taped the eggs to a display each Sunday. The young people ran out of eggs as \$813 was collected for the offering. Pictured are some of the young people who participated (from left): Peyton Ferguson, Carlye Washington, Sarah Beth Dickerson, and Megan Romberger.



**SUNRISE CHURCH, PETAL**, honored their mothers on May 5 prior to Mother's day with a tea party. Guest speaker was Katrina Garner.



## CHINA

cont. from p. 1

citizenship rights, CNN said, and he asked people to help him "promote justice and fairness in China."

He expressed mixed feelings about seeking refuge in the United States, CNN said, because of unfinished business in his home country.

The 40-year-old self-trained lawyer, blind since childhood, was imprisoned and placed under house arrest for exposing the barbaric nature of China's one-child policy. In one of the most tragic examples Chen had helped uncover, the government forced a woman who was seven months pregnant to have an abortion and forcibly sterilized her, LifeNews.com reported.

U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., a longtime champion of Chen's cause, met with him upon Chen's arrival in New Jersey.

"After years of enduring physical and psychological torture, imprisonment and hate, the man, Chen Guangcheng, who defended Chinese women from the crime of forced abortion, is finally free. America welcomes

this extraordinary family with open arms," Smith said.

Bob Fu, president of the Texas-based China Aid Association and a Christian Chinese pastor in exile, received a phone call from Chen just after Chinese authorities told him to pack for travel to the U.S.

"We are happy for Chen and his family," Fu said after the call. "This is a great day for freedom fighters. This further proves that constructive dialogue with international pressure can surely produce concrete positive results. We pray for his family's safe journey."

Fu's organization has claimed to be in possession of documentation that Chinese authorities plan to eliminate the Christian church in China within ten years.

Chen has two children, a son and a daughter. Certain disabled persons, including the blind, are allowed to have a second child in China, despite the one-child policy.

Chen, his children, and "equally heroic wife" will get to rest, recuperate and recover in New York, Smith said, adding that the children can begin the process of "healing from emotional trauma no child should ever endure."

"Great human rights leaders are never separated from the noble causes they espoused," Smith said. "...Not all the Chens are free and safe, however. The Chinese government must immediately end its deplorable retaliation against Chen's family and friends who remain in China."

"Over the last several days, several of Chen's relatives and supporters have been arrested and brutally beaten as part of the Chinese government's refocused retaliation," the congressman said. "They can't beat him anymore, but they are beating his relatives and friends."

A Time magazine blog noted May 21 that China was downplaying Chen's case. An editorial in the Global Times, a tabloid run by the Chinese Communist Party, said, "The Chen drama appears to be buzzing, but it has barely impacted Chinese society. The majority of Chinese have a mature and stable judgment of this country. That is why dissidents, who often create a sensation in Western media, fail to make a dent among the Chinese."

The newspaper has used that line of argument before, Time said.

Smith held two hearings on Chen's behalf in recent days, with Chen speak-

ing via phone from a Beijing hospital with Fu translating. Smith is chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Smith reiterated at the May 15 hearing Chen's value to the cause of human rights in China.

"Chen Guangcheng is among the bravest defenders of women's rights in the world," Smith said. "Chen defended thousands of women from the ongoing, most egregious systematic state-sponsored exploitation and abuse of women in human history — pervasive forced abortion and involuntary sterilization as part of China's one child per couple policy — and has suffered torture, cruel and degrading treatment, unjust incarceration and multiple beatings as a result."

"The magnitude of the exploitation of women in China has been largely overlooked, trivialized and even enabled by world leaders," Smith said.

Smith nominated Chen for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 along with two other persecuted Chinese human rights advocates. The congressman had attempted to visit Chen in China since last fall but was thwarted by the Chinese government.

## ACEH

cont. from p. 1

chief, who said that the time for dialog was past — all he wanted was a schedule of the church demolitions," Lingga said. "It's not that Christians do not want to apply for permits, but it is extremely difficult to secure permission

even though we have put forth our maximal efforts."

The church closures, which took place May 1-3, included three Catholic buildings, one Huria Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church, or HKI), and two chapels.

Police accompanied by demonstrators, who were reportedly organized by the hard-line Islamic Defenders Front, sealed the churches, reportedly padlocking the front gate and posting a sign stating, "In 3 x 24 hours, the regency government must tear down this church building."

Aceh Singkil Police Chief Bambang Syafrianto, after listening to the demonstrators on April 30, had suggested that the Christians be given three days to tear down their church buildings, and that an enforcement team

would be formed to demolish them if they failed to do so, Lingga said, adding that the mob received this suggestion by clapping their hands.

When the enforcement team along with Muslim demonstrators went to the GKPPD church in Siatas the next day, however, dozens of wailing women met them, and one woman fainted during the protest, Lingga said.

Encountering this resistance, the team relented and ordered church elders to meet with the regent on May 2.

The enforcement team then went to Paris Lake district, where they were able to close three churches: the Biskang GKPPD church in Napagaluh, the Biskang Catholic church in Napagaluh, and the Catholic church in Sikoran.

On May 2, Lingga and another minister, Erde Berutu, along with some members from a GKPPD church in Siatas, met with Acting Regent H. Razali, who said the eventual destruction of the church buildings was "not open to question," Lingga recounted.

The regent told them that he was not trying to destroy churches but enforce rules regarding the construction of

houses of worship, Lingga said.

The next day, May 3, more churches were sealed, including the GKPPD churches in Siatas, Siompin and Mandumpang.

Indonesia's Aceh Province suffered massive loss of life and destruction in the Indian Ocean tsunami in late 2004. The region, according to some scholars, is where Islam first gained a foothold in Indonesia in the 1600s.

## MS POSITIONS

**PART-TIME CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTER NEEDED AT MARS HILL BAPTIST CHURCH IN SUMMIT, MS.** Please e-mail resumes to [info@marshill-bc.org](mailto:info@marshill-bc.org) or mail them to "MHBC Search Committee" at 6145 N. Greensburg Rd., Summit, MS 39666. For more information, please contact Mars Hill at 601-567-2550.

**ZION HILL BAPTIST CHURCH, WESSON, MS IS SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER.** Please send resumes to Zion Hill Baptist Church, Attention: Youth Minister, Search Committee 8081 Martinsville Rd., Wesson, MS 39191 or email [brothertom@zionhillwesson.org](mailto:brothertom@zionhillwesson.org)

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH IN NEED OF A PIANIST** Sundays AM & PM & Wednesday evenings Please send resume to First Baptist Church Attn: Personnel Committee P.O. Box 110, Morton, MS 39117

**BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTER NEEDED.** Mail resume to: "Search Team", Toomsaba Baptist Church, P.O. Box 487, Toomsaba, MS 39364.

**SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH IN SONTAG MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC.** Please send resumes to: Shiloh Baptist Church PO Box 166 Sontag MS 39665. Call 601-587-7653 for additional information and leave message.

**EAST BOONEVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH IN BOONEVILLE, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR SENIOR PASTOR.** Candidates must be theologically conservative, stand on the inerrancy of scripture, and possess strong leadership and communication skills. Please send resume to EBBC, 4 CR 7015, Booneville, MS 38829.

## CLASSIFIEDS

**GOSPEL CONVENTION JUNE 7-9TH OKAHO LA BAPTIST 3889 OLD HWY 11 HATTIESBURG, MS FEATURING 20 ARTISTS.** Thurs. 7hr (6:30pm-11pm): Chronicle, Homecoming (gospel-style), Fri. 8hr (6pm-11pm): Mark Trammell Q1 3:16, others. Sat. 9hr (12:30pm-11pm): Perry's, Wells Brothers, Riders, others. Schedule at [www.MSQCA.com](http://www.MSQCA.com). Talent Contest Sat. 9AM register entry fee. For Tickets, Hookups, Booths, call 601-466-4343.

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## Bible Drills



**FIRST CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,** recently recognized State Youth Bible Drillers (top photo, from left) Amelia Henson, Madison Alford, Courtney Smith, and Calvin Prince, along with Children Bible Drillers (bottom photo, from left) Callie Prince, Ian Edwards, Casey Hight, and Zoie Henson.

It was early one morning and I was walking out the door headed to work when the phone started ringing. You know how it is. You think about going back and answering the phone, but you realize that you need to get on your way and if it is anybody other than a telemarketer they will track you down. If it is a sales pitch, they will call back again in the middle of a meal. But for whatever reason I felt compelled to walk back into the room, pick up the phone, and answer the caller. "Hello," I said. I heard on the other end of the phone, "Doctor." I responded by saying, "What can I do for you?" The caller said, "Well, I need to talk to a doctor." I said, "Do you need a physician?" The reply came, "Yeah and a relative of mine gave me this number and told me you were a good neurosurgeon."

I said, "What number did you call?" He gave me my number. I said, "I would love to help you, but I am not a neurosurgeon." At that point I could tell that the guy was getting irritated with me. He said, "Well my aunt gave me your number and she told me that you were a good doctor who was nice and would help me." Now I begin to sense that he was not pleased with me and wanted me to help him so I said, "I wish that I could help you, but I ain't no brain surgeon. If it will make you feel better, I will take your money and try to operate on you." At that point I realized I was making some headway and this guy did not want me to take a scalpel to him. "I am sorry," he said. "I do not know where she got your number or why she thought you were a neurosurgeon."

Realizing that we had developed a little bit of a rapport in our short conversation, I said, "I tell you what if your relatives are going to be passing out my



## I Ain't No Brain Surgeon

number, I will see if I can take a course or two and we will just setup shop. I will start doing surgery and you can spread the word for me." He laughed and the two of us decided that was not a good idea. We concluded our phone meeting and I headed off to work. I suppose he called his relative to check on where she got the number and to try to find another doctor.

As I entered into my day, I processed this unexpected encounter that I had with this fellow. I realized that there were some real lessons to be learned and not the least of which is **don't get upset and don't be angry when someone tries to tell you the truth.** Now the reason why that is so important is that oftentimes we hear things that we do not particularly want to hear whether it is at church, the doctor's office, or even on a phone call. Keep yourself in check, evaluate, and accept the truth for what it is. Looking back

on the conversation, I assumed that the fellow got testy with me because he thought that I was a neurosurgeon and just did not want to be bothered with him. Nothing was further from the truth.

Through the years I have marveled at the way some people have gotten upset with something that I said or presented from Scripture because they thought that I was trying to attack them, hurt them, or publicly reprimand them for something they had said, done, or failed to do. When the fact was that I knew nothing about the situation to which they were applying the Scripture. If the truth of the Word of God comes to our hearts, we need to recognize that God is trying to help us and not hurt us.

**The second thing that was significant to me is that we need to be alert and careful about where we get our truth.** The Bible says,

"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever" (Ps. 119:160). I am fully aware of the fact that there are many people in our world today that do not accept the Word of God as truthful. They do not believe the Bible is the Word of God, but that does not change the fact that it is God's true, unmistakable, and accurate Word guarding us from wrong and pointing us to right. In our world that seeks to accept all religions as equal and the Bible as just another religious book that people hold on to, the reality is that it stands alone as the true Word from God. Paul expressed this in the book of Romans, "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). The Word stands unscathed.

**The third thought that I had was that if by chance you need a neurosurgeon and you do not know where to turn, call me.** Don't call because I can recommend somebody, but call because even what looks like a mistake God can turn into a spiritual encounter. You see ever since I received that phone call and I was totally useless in responding to the fellow, I have not been able to get him or the conversation off of my mind. So whether he knows it or not day after day I have been praying for him not only that God would guide him to get in touch with whatever doctor he needs, but that God would work in his life to bring help and healing to him. I ain't no brain surgeon, but I can pray for you!

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

## SBC gender strategist warns against harsh homosexual pronouncements

**SOUTHLAKE, Texas** (BP and local reports) — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) national strategist for gender issues has released a statement condemning the harsh language of two independent Baptist pastors from North Carolina whose remarks on homosexuals and gender identity have gone viral on the Internet.

Andy Gipson, a bivocational pastor, state legislator, and member of First Church, Magee, was not mentioned by Stith but also drew criticism when his Facebook page quoted a Leviticus passage from the Old Testament that called for putting homosexuals to death. Gipson has declined to apologize for quoting the Leviticus passage, and said he does not wish for homosexuals to be put to death.

The controversial statements came from pastors of N.C. churches not affiliated with the 16-million-member Southern Baptist Convention but "they still stand as reminders to us — not only pastors, but all believers — that above all else we must represent the heart of Christ," wrote Bob Stith, a retired pastor in Southlake, Texas, who has served the SBC in the gender issues role since 2007.

Stith, who has said he was once "negative and condemning" toward homosexuals, wrote in a May 23 statement released by the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission that Southern Baptists seek to be "proactive and redemptive in reaching out to those who struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions."

"From the video clips it would appear that both men lead fairly large churches. I wonder how many people in those congregations were gripped with the fear that their personal struggle might be discovered," Stith wrote. "And how

many have loved ones involved in homosexuality? I wonder about the loneliness and isolation they must have experienced, knowing they could never share those burdens."

Pastor Charles Worley of Providence Road Baptist Church in Maiden, N.C., described on one website as an independent, fundamental "KJV-only" congregation, drew attention from CNN's Anderson Cooper and from other national media outlets after his May 13 rant went viral over the Web after he said homosexuals should be rounded up behind an electric fence.

It's not the first time Worley has targeted homosexuals, with Worley referencing lynching in a 1978 sermon linked from the website [sermon-audio.com](http://sermon-audio.com) and reported by the New York Daily News on May 23.

Another pastor, Sean Harris of Berean Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C., has since expressed regret for his words, claiming he was taken out of context and admitting after garnering attention on YouTube that he spoke carelessly.

During the sermon leading up to the vote on a North Carolina marriage protection amendment, which voters passed, Harris told his church that when young boys begin acting effeminate, dads should squash those tendencies by striking their sons.

In a subsequent YouTube video after news media scrutiny and outcry from homosexual activists, Harris tells an interviewer: "I have learned a lot from this, Justin. And I've learned that I need to be more careful and deliberate with my words. And I hope that if I take away anything from this incident, that I will be even better and more deliberate, more careful, with exactly the words I select."

### In other Church News:

► Pass Road Church, Gulfport, will present Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames June 3 - 5, 7 p.m. Tickets are free, and groups of 15 or more can make reservations by calling (228) 863-1697.

## BIBL10C1PHER

ELY BCTIT ELTUCQPLO TEPY ILWM

WRCN, WRCV WREW EQC URMZC LCCY

LMW E FRVTPXPPEL; KIW WRCV WREW

EQC TPXA.

ZIAC JPSC: WRQWV-MLC

Clue: U = W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Eight: Thirty-Six

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005



## Bible Drill

### Homecomings

► **Mount Horeb Church, Covington-Jeff Davis Association:** Homecoming, June 3, 10 a.m.; Shannon Marshall, speaker; Bob Thames, music; James E. Parker, pastor.

► **Hopewell Church, Scott County:** Revival, June 3-8; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Mon.-Fri., 6:30 p.m.; Mike Everett, Paul Smith, Ken McLemore, Gary Wyatt, Jim Everett, and Larry Duncan, speakers; Ed Crawley, pastor.

► **Mt. Carmel Church, Edinburg:** Revival, June 3-7; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Thurs., 7 p.m.; James Messer, speaker.

► **Liberty Church, Jefferson Community, Carrollton:** Homecoming, June 3, 10:45 a.m.; Jimmy Breland, speaker.

► **Colla Church, Carroll Association:** Homecoming and revival, June 3-6; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by lunch and old-fashioned singing; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Perry Irvin, speaker; Irvin Brothers, music, Tuesday night.



**LEFLORE CHURCH, HOLCOMB,** recognizes its youth and children's Bible drillers.



**CALVARY CHURCH, WAYNESBORO,** recognizes its Bible drillers: leader Bettina Bonner, Dane Deas, Darren Hartley, Tyler Knight, and children's minister Carrie DeVenny.



**SALEM CHURCH, LEAKE COUNTY,** recognizes its Bible drillers: Allyson Crocker, Anna Vowell, Candiece Barrett, and Jasmine McCaughn.



**ACKERMAN CHURCH, ACKERMAN** recognizes its Bible drillers: Hayes Wood, Halea Wood, Michelle Parker, leader, and Alison Hulett.



**FIRST CHURCH, CALHOUN CITY,** recognizes its children's and youth Bible drillers. Jim and Rita Cole, leaders; Wayne Gullett, transitional pastor.



**LEMOYNE CHURCH, BILOXI,** recognizes its youth Bible drillers: Brittany Thompson, Tiffany Patt, Andrew McNair, and Denise King.

## Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"As many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## College News



Emily Fokeladeh, German language instructor at Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton for 39 years, has been chosen as the university's Distinguished Professor of the Year. A 1961 Clinton High School graduate, Fokeladeh holds degrees from MC and the University of Mississippi in Oxford, and also studied as a Fulbright Scholar in Austria.



Each year Mississippi College holds a reception in honor of its nearly 500 faculty and staff members for their dedicated service and support. During the program held recently in Anderson Hall, special recognition was given by the university to its retirees and also to current employees who's tenure marked a milestone year in 2012. Employees receiving their 35-year service award: Martha Wanda Mosley, Clinton, Assist. Director, Learning Resource Center; Cynthia S. Hampton, Jackson (39209), Trainer/Help Desk Coordinator, Computer Services; Ronald W. Howard, Clinton, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Prof., Dept. of History & Political Science; and Hattie M. Cavett, Clinton, Housekeeper, Physical Plant.



Mississippi College employees receiving their 40-year service award: Jacqueline G. Jones, Jackson (39202), Associate Prof. of Accounting, School of Business; Frank E. Hood, Bolton, Prof., School of Business; and Bonnie Jean Hawkins, Forest, Manager, Mailroom and Copy Center. NOT PICTURED: Masie B. McGraw, Bolton, Housekeeper, Physical Plant; Bennie C. Palmer, Clinton, Painter, Physical Plant; and Ida M. Spann, Bolton, Housekeeper, Physical Plant.

**BaptistRecord**

## Vacation Bible School

➤ **Evansville Church, Coldwater:** June 11 – 15, 8:30 a.m. – noon.

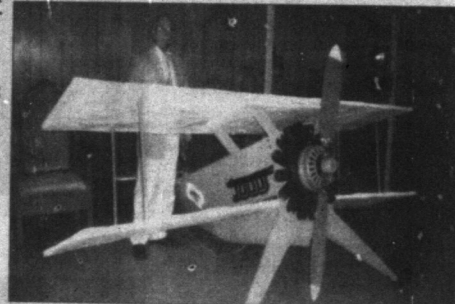
➤ **Murphy Creek Church, Winston Association:** June 11 – 15, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m., preschool – 12 grade; supper served each evening; for more information, call (662) 803-5994.

➤ **First Church, Glendale, Hattiesburg:** June 3 – 8, 5:30 – 8 p.m.; ages 3 – 6th grade.

➤ **Steep Hollow Church, Poplarville:** June 11 – 15, 6 – 9 p.m.; for more information, call (601) 795-4638.

➤ **Belle Fountain Church, Ocean Springs:** June 11 – 15, 8:30 a.m. – noon; kindergarten – 5th grade; for registration information, call (228) 875-2973.

➤ **Glendale Church, Leland:** June 11 – 15. Deacon and older children's Sunday School teacher Gary Petty designed and built an airplane to be used as part of the VBS decorations.



## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

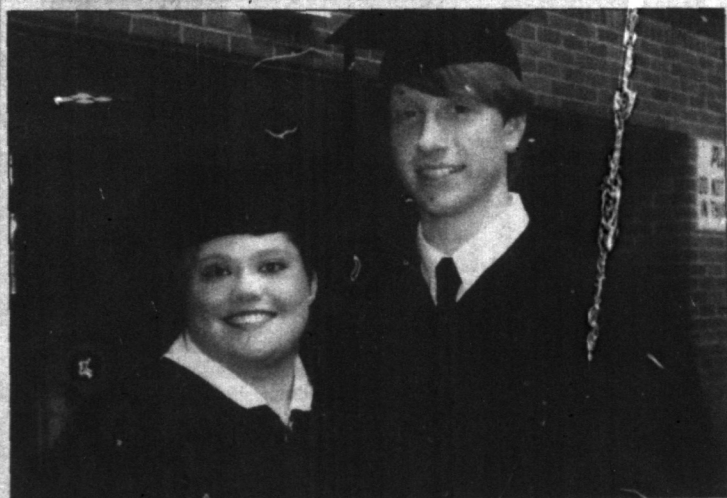
Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: [baptist-record@mbcb.org](mailto:baptist-record@mbcb.org).



## Just for the Record



**NEW FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, JASPER**, honored graduating seniors May 20. Shown are Trevor Ayllon, Dakota Griffin, Chris Fykes, and Dustin Harris.



**CALVARY CHURCH, CLEVELAND**, held a senior graduation reception May 20 for Alana Lynn Raper and Michael Baron Robinson (shown).



The WMU of **LUDLOW CHURCH, LUDLOW**, presented Easter baskets to the widows and widowers of the community. Shown are Audie Lawson, Mary Campbell, Wanda Fitzhugh, Pat McKenzie, Amber McKenzie, Sylvia Graves, and Brooksie Lathem.



**JUNIPER GROVE CHURCH, PEARL RIVER ASSOCIATION**, hosted a GAMM where 48 girls and leaders from 11 churches learned about Margaret Lackey, Annie Armstrong, and Lottie Moon. Several BSU ladies told them about people in London. The girls enjoyed high tea and packed 80 hygiene bags to use at Friendship House and 46 bags for a women's shelter on the Gulf Coast. The offering of \$165 was given to the Pearl River Community College BSU for their trip to London this summer.



A group from **GRANDVIEW CHURCH, PEARL**, have been making sleeping mats for the homeless using plastic shopping bags. Each mat was made from 900 bags.



**CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, honored all mothers on Mother's Day. Shown are Kari Gill, youngest mother; Shirley Grice, oldest mother with most children present; Helen Richardson, oldest mother; and Leanne Douglas, youngest mother with most children present.



**FIRST CHURCH, CRYSTAL SPRINGS**, held its RA/GA recognition service May 9, beginning with recognition of their Mission Friends. Approximately 20 RA boys and 26 GA girls received badges and certificates.

# Pro-abortion support in U.S. at all-time low in Gallup polling

WASHINGTON (BP) • Americans who consider themselves pro-choice on abortion are at a record low, according to a new Gallup public opinion poll.

Forty-one percent of Americans identify themselves as pro-choice • marking a drop of six percent since July and the lowest percentage since Gallup began asking the public in 1995 to self-identify as pro-choice or pro-life. The Gallup organization reported the dramatic downturn for pro-choice advocates on May 23.

The same survey showed 50% of Americans identify themselves as pro-life, one point less than the record high, which was set in May 2009. The previous low of 42% for pro-choicers also came in the 2009 poll.

Pro-life leaders expressed no amazement at the trend — which was demonstrated among Republicans, Democrats, and independents.

"This is not just an American phenomenon," said C. Ben Mitchell, professor of moral philosophy at Union University in

Tennessee. "Now that imaging technologies offer us a clearer picture of what's happening in the womb, it is increasingly difficult to dehumanize the unborn person in a mother's body."

"Even in our fallen, fragile world, human life in all its stages gives testimony to the image of God," said Mitchell, a longtime consultant with Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List pro-life organization, said in a written statement, "It comes as no surprise that more Americans are shedding the 'pro-choice' label as they come to terms with what is really meant by this hollow branding."

"The big [lie that] 'abortion liberates' ... and those who promulgate it are becoming unmasked," Dannenfelser said.

In the breakdown by political identification, the poll showed:

- Independents identifying as pro-choice dropped since May 2011 from 51%

to 41%, while those labeling themselves as pro-life increased from 41% to 47%.

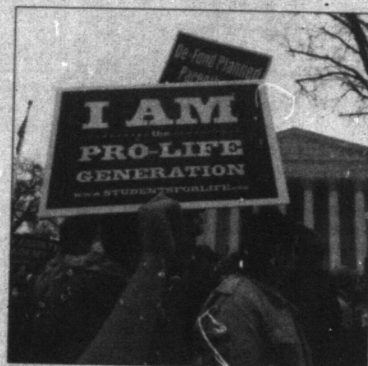
- Republicans pro-choicers fell in the last year from 28% to 22%, while pro-lifers grew from 68% to 72%.

- Democrats identifying as pro-choice decreased in the last 12 months from 68% to 58%, while those considering themselves pro-life increased from 27% to 34%.

While the survey demonstrated a noteworthy shift in Americans' self-identification as pro-life or pro-choice, it showed little change on the questions of the morality and legality of abortion, Gallup reported. The survey found:

- 51% say abortion is "morally wrong," the same as in May 2011, and 38% say it is "morally acceptable," one point less than last year.

- 52% say abortion should be legal "only under circumstances," a two-point increase in the last year, while 25% say it should be legal "under any circumstances" and 20% say it should be illegal "in all circumstances."



**PRO-LIFE RISING** — A new Gallup poll announced May 23 indicates support for abortion among Americans is at an all-time low, providing good news to pro-life marchers during a recent Washington rally. (BP photo)

## Just for the Record



RA's and GAs from **SLAYDEN CHURCH, SLAYDEN**, made 261 Once Was Blind but Now I See dolls and salvation bracelets to the Appalachian Reach Out Center in Inez, Ky., for their VBS. Ruth Hill, coordinator; Rusty Fair, pastor.



**NEW HEBRON CHURCH, NEW HEBRON**, held a GA recognition service and tea party in May. The girls raised \$718.25 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.



**FIRST CHURCH, JACKSON**, held a senior adult Police Officers/Firefighters Appreciation Luncheon. Shown are Goldie Schimpf, Marie Black, Fire Chief Raymond J. McNulty, Charles McNeill, Assistant Fire Chief Sidney Johnson, JoAnn Davis, District Fire Chief Kenneth R. Swayzer, and Jim Schimpf.



Lakeside Baptist Assembly (aka Camp Lakeside), owned and operated by **NORTH CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION** (Grenada and Tallahatchie Counties) celebrated its 50th Anniversary Saturday, May 5. Over two hundred youth, children and adults attended the celebration which included swimming, an inflatable slide for the children, a cake auction, silent auction, a Flipping Chicken dinner, concessions and singing by local talent all afternoon and into the evening. The featured singers were Paid In Full of New Albany. Several speakers shared about their experiences with Camp Lakeside over the years. A plaque was presented to Kay Ergle by Lowell Ingram, Association Missions Director on behalf of North Central Baptist Association in memory of Bill Ergle, long time trustee and treasurer for Lakeside Baptist Assembly. The plaque will be displayed in the Chapel at the entrance to the camp campus.



## The Leadership Dare • Joshua 1:1-11, 16-18

Leadership is a major issue for every generation. Good leadership results in productive lives and enduring results. Poor leadership is characterized by squandered opportunities, wasted time, malfeasance, misappropriation of funds, and detrimental results to those who are being led. On the local church level, good leaders make a positive contribution to the overall health and wellbeing of the home congregation as they fulfill the Great Commission.

This lesson is designed to help adults dare to accept leadership responsibilities in their churches. The message is based on God's calling of Joshua to take leadership at the time of Moses' death (Josh. 1:1-18; NIV). The lesson underscores the Lord's promise and presence, Joshua's obedience, and the affirmation he received from the people.

In the local church, leadership takes different forms. While God uses pastors and staff members, He also uses an army of volunteers to staff key leadership positions in the church. Church leadership positions include Sunday school teachers, children's choir workers, hostesses, greeters, financial secretaries, deacons, maintenance personnel, and many others. Some leaders serve large numbers of people while others might be over just a few, but all leaders are important. As you consider taking the leadership dare and embracing the call to the leadership position God is offering you, let's examine some points to ponder through this week's lesson outline.

### 1. Rely on God's Promise (Josh. 1:1-5a)

God approached Joshua about being a leader because Moses, His "servant," had died (1:1-2). All true leadership is a matter of service. Godly leadership refers to serving others in such a way that the group moves in the direction God desires for them.

God's promises to Joshua related specifically to taking possession of the Promised Land (1:3-5a). What specific needs could you provide leadership for in your church?

### 2. Rely on the Lord's Presence (Josh. 1:5b-9)

This segment of the lesson begins and ends with a confirmation of God's presence with Joshua as he carried out his leadership role. The Lord told Joshua, "I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you" (1:5b, NIV) and "the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (1:9b,

NIV). Because of the Lord's guaranteed presence in the leadership venture, Joshua was commanded to "strong and courageous" (1:6, 7, 9, NIV). Joshua no doubt felt weak and inadequate to fill Moses' sandals. However, Moses had experienced the same sense of inadequacy when God called him (Exod. 3-4). The secret to servant leadership is dependence upon God's promise and upon His presence. Do you trust the Lord to be with you in the leadership task He is calling you to do?



## Explore the Bible

with W. Wayne VanHorn

### 3. Respond with Obedience (Josh. 1:10-11)

Joshua had been commanded "to obey all the law My servant Moses gave you" (1:7, NIV). He was guaranteed he would be "prosperous and successful" (1:8, NIV), a reference to victory in leading the people into the Promised Land, not a guarantee of financial opulence. Joshua obeyed! Through the people's officers, he ordered everyone to be prepared to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land in three days.

His obedience was based on God's promise. He assured the people the Lord was giving the land to them to be their own (1:11).

### 4. Receive Affirmation (Josh. 1:16-18)

Joshua was probably surprised by the obedient response of the people. They pledged to do whatever he commanded them and to go wherever he sent them (1:16). They pledged themselves to Joshua to the same extent they had to Moses. In the people's eyes their new leader was as important as the one they had revered for the previous 40 years. They even threatened the harshest judgment on anyone refusing to obey Joshua. Then they concluded their response by uttering to Joshua the same encouragement God had given him, "Only be strong and courageous!" (1:18, NIV).

Every local church needs servants leaders, people who will take their group, whether 1,000 worshippers or 10 Sunday school class members, and move them in a godly direction. I once heard a Sunday school teacher tell how a preschool worker cradled her when she was two years old and sang "Jesus Loves Me." That dedicated worker had experienced God's promise in her own life and passed it on to a two year old, who became a Sunday school teacher when she reached adulthood. That's leadership based on God's promise! One woman took the leadership dare and lives were changed forever.

## Just Going Through the Motions? • Malachi 1

Lord's Day Morning. Again. Assembly lined, we ironed our clothes. Finally dressed, we grabbed our pop tarts, eating our way out the door. Someone was appointed commander of the search and rescue mission to locate AND gather all our bibles. Collectively exasperated, we piled into the van and fussed our way to Sunday School. We hung a left on Victory Lane and slid nicely into our favorite parking spot in the shade. Last Sunday, our pastor had told us that today's sermon would contain only forty words. Short and sweet. Nice.

The parking lot was filling up with cars but something was seriously wrong. People were standing in long lines at every entrance door. All the doors were locked. Where in the world was Mister Sam? He always has the locks turning, the lights burning, the a/c churning! About ten after ten, several disgruntled folks peeled out of line, rattled keys and headed for their cars. They would have gladly waited longer at the football arena, but not here. Hold on! Someone's inside the front foyer! Without a word or even a wave, our pastor turned his key in the lock, walked out the front door, turned his back to the crowd, closed and re-locked the door and walked to his vehicle. He placed both hands on the top of his car, looked over his windshield at the stunned group

and gave us his promised forty words: "Next week, we will begin our series on the final book of the Old Testament. Our key theme will be found in verse ten chapter one. Please find the time to read those forty words. You have just heard mine."

Could this happen at our churches? Maybe it should.

Apathy. The "A" at the beginning means "without."

The "pathos" at the end means "feeling or concern."

The word "apathy" is

desperate enough as a

stand-alone.

When it is modified by the

adjective "spiritual," it wounds the heart of God. Through the pen of the prophet Malachi, God expresses His displeasure for spiritual apathy in 1:10, "Oh, that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you, says the Lord of hosts, nor will I accept an offering from you" (NASB).

The amazing love of Holy God stands in

## Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



sharp contrast to the appalling arrogance of sinful man. Every generation since Adam and Eve has deserved Noah's flood. God continues to call us to Himself, especially those of us who know Him by faith through belief in His Son Jesus. Spiritual apathy is worse than ignorance or outright rejection of truth. Many people struggle with

the opening verses of Malachi where God says he "loved" Jacob and "hated" Esau. My struggle is to understand how in the world God would choose

to use ANY of us, especially me.

Malachi is the final deputy of Old Testament prophecy. Fifty-five verses comprise his scathing message, as relevant as today's headlines and as revealing as today's apathetic church membership. Biblical evidence is found for a writing date after Babylonian exile during the time of the preaching of Ezra and the rebuilding of Solomon's temple and Nehemiah's wall. His identity is unknown. His name by definition means

"messenger." Malachi is listed as one of the twelve "minor" prophets, a descriptor based on the word count of their messages, which were short in number, but tall in truth.

Most of the message of Malachi records direct quotes from the Lord of Hosts Himself. The Lord Almighty. The Lord of Armies. The Warrior God. The Lord of All. This was serious business. The chosen people of God were despising the name and authority of God. Every sin finds its origin at that exact place. People were ignoring the love of God. Priests were defiling the altars of God with their unacceptable sacrifices. Worst of all...the people did not seem to care. Their inward attitudes and outward worship revealed their true heart condition.

After speaking these words of God, Malachi rode off into the agonizingly silent sunsets of the inter-testamental period. God gave them a good talking to and promptly left them with four hundred years to think about it. God had prepared to replace their unrighteousness with "SONrighteousness." Unblemished sacrifices pointed to the Christ, the perfect sacrifice. The next scene of Jewish history opened with a star over a Bethlehem manger. Welcome to the book of Malachi where God asks the questions.

# SBC pastors approve African-American at helm

NASHVILLE, Tenn (BP) — Eighty-six percent of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) pastors who expressed an opinion believe it would be good for the convention to have an African-American leader.

Fred Luter, an African-American pastor from New Orleans, will be nominated for SBC president at the denomination's annual meeting in June.

LifeWay Research polled SBC pastors asking their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: "Without regard to any individual, I think it would be a good thing to have an African-American as president of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Of the nearly 1,000 SBC pastors who responded, 61% agree it would be positive, 10% disagree, but 29% don't have an opinion. Of those who had an opinion, 50% strongly agree and 36% somewhat agree.

LifeWay Research president Ed Stetzer said the results are good news for a denomination born, in part, out of the racial divides of the mid-1800s.

"Southern Baptists have come a long way. In the last 20 years, the percentage of non-Anglo SBC churches has grown from five percent to 20%, and now seven percent of Southern Baptist churches are identified as primarily African-American," Stetzer said, "but we are still a predominantly Anglo denomination, so it is particularly encouraging to see the openness and enthusiasm for an African-American SBC president."

Stetzer believes the high number of those not expressing an opinion, and some of those with a negative answer, may indicate many pastors believe race should play no part in selection of SBC leadership.

Regional location of the pastor shows no pattern of significant statistical differences. In fact, the results show many similarities across regions. For example, 66% of SBC pastors in the Northeast agree, while 62% of pastors in the South agree.

The survey results are reminiscent of public opinion polls taken four years ago that asked if Americans were ready for a black U.S. president. A pre-election CBS News poll in 2008 showed 68% of Americans agreed the country was ready for an African-American U.S. president.

Stetzer explained the LifeWay Research question was poised to gain perspective on pastors' views of this anticipated historical vote, but was not focused specifically on Luter. "We wanted to know about race's role in denominational leadership," Stetzer said.

"What we didn't want was a referendum or pre-convention vote of confidence of any individual's skills or electability. That's why we asked the question the way we did."

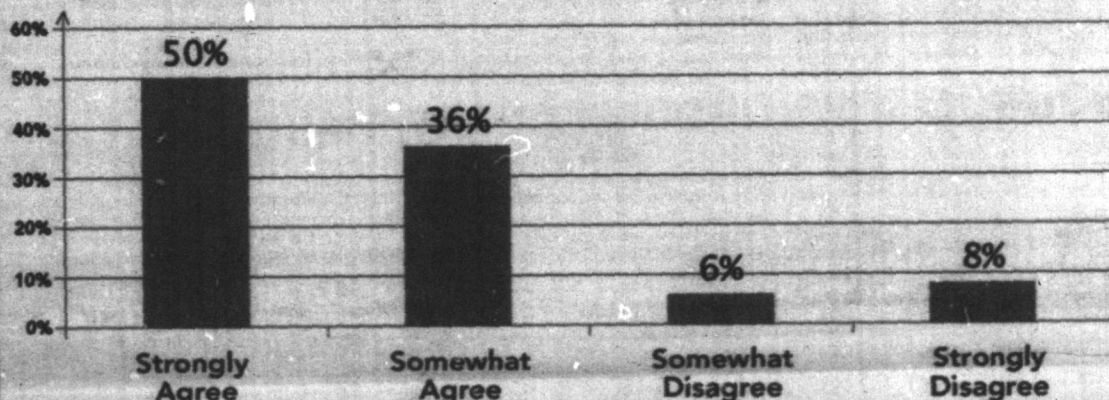
"Pastors, when answering, may have thought about a black SBC leader as being a sign of national racial progress or even a positive pivot point in the direction of the denomination," Stetzer said.

"Either way, more than 8 out of 10 is an overwhelming percentage and a sign of remarkable progress by any measure."

The question was asked as part of a mail survey of 1,066 SBC pastors conducted April 1 - May 11. The mailing list was randomly drawn from a stratified list of all SBC churches. Surveys were mailed to the senior pastor with the option of completing online.

Responses were weighted to match the actual geographic distribution and worship attendance of SBC churches.

## 6 of 7 SBC pastors with an opinion agree it would be good to have an African-American as SBC president



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Question: "Without regard to any individual, I think it would be a good thing to have an African-American president of the SBC."

## Rights group: Kazakh convicted on concocted evidence

OSLO, Norway (BP) — Authorities in Kazakhstan have fabricated a Baptist man's conviction for offenses against the nation's religion law, according to a Norway-based religious rights organization.

Forum 18 reported May 22 that a case against Vasily Stakhnev, a Baptist, has been fabricated involving religious literature distribution.

Unregistered religious activity is illegal in Kazakhstan, as is religious literature that has not passed state censorship. Members of the Baptist Council of Churches are easy targets for state oppression, as they stand on principle in refusing government registration.

Police raided the flats of Stakhnev and two other Baptists in Serebryansk in eastern Kazakhstan in late February, confiscating Christian booklets from all three flats. Stakhnev told Forum 18 that neighbors acknowledged police pressure to sign statements that he had "stuck religious literature in the door handles or under the doors of their flats."

One neighbor said that even though he told police he sometimes found religious literature at his door, he never said Stakhnev did it, and he was not even sure what he signed for the police. Stakhnev told Forum 18 he did not distribute Christian literature but kept it at his home.

Local police chief Serikhan Tozhigitov in Serebryansk told Forum 18 that the police "did not force anyone to sign anything," but he added that "the law

demands that they [the Baptists] be registered. They cannot distribute religious literature unless they register."

He also told Forum 18 that police will continue to raid the private homes of Baptists "if we find that they continue distributing literature."

On April 27, Judge Anuar Khan Kalenov found Stakhnev guilty of violating a law that prohibits "carrying out of missionary activity by citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and persons without citizenship without registration (re-registration), as well as the use by missionaries of religious literature, informational materials of religious content or objects of religious significance without a positive assessment of a religious studies expert analysis," Forum 18 reported.

Kalenov levied the maximum fine of 161,800 Tenge (\$1,095 US), which Forum 18 described as a huge fine given Stakhnev's low income. The verdict took no account of claims that "witnesses" signed statements under police pressure. Stakhnev will appeal the ruling.

Members of the Baptist Council of Churches tell Forum 18 that police have raided private homes where they meet for worship and that "normally without warrants, police film and question those present during the raids, and take statements against church pastors and ordinary members."

Baptists told Forum 18 that on March 2, Police and

Prosecutor's Office officials in Rudny in northern Kazakhstan raided the home of another Baptist, Timur Aliyev, which is also used as a place of worship.

Twelve officials "arrived in five different cars, broke into the home and began to take photographs of not only the meeting hall but also all the living rooms," Baptists reported to Forum 18. "They even looked in the refrigerator."

Officials also recruited their own witnesses to sign police records, Forum 18 reported.

Murat Khan Zhumabayev, director of the regional Department of the Agency of Religious Affairs, told Forum 18 that officials will not take any measures against the Baptists they raided. "We are not against any religion," he said. "But the Religion Law requires all religious communities to register officially."

Kazakhstan adopted a law in October 2011 stripping previously registered "small religious groups," including Baptists, of their registration and requiring them to re-register with at least 50 members. Pastors of Baptist groups that do not register have faced hefty fines, and in one case a judge outlawed a congregation.

When confronted by Forum 18 with the fact that the religion law's restrictions contradict the Kazakh constitution's statement that "everyone shall have the right to freedom of conscience," Zhumabayev asked Forum 18 to submit its questions in writing and refused further discussion.